

# Handling the Boss from Hell

By Judith Filek—President  
Impact Communications, Inc.



Bosses are all different. Some are very even-tempered. Nothing seems to throw them. Others lash out, are demeaning and downright hard to bear. If you are one of those people searching for ways to work with a boss from hell, here are some suggestions.

First, examine if you have contributed to the current ugly situation in any way. Did you neglect to update the boss? Did you bring in your project over budget? Are you whining about a colleague, instead of dealing with the situation yourself? Have you failed to find a solution to a problem? If any of these things apply, then you need to examine what you can do differently—and do it quickly before the boss loses all confidence in you.

Next, consider your typical response. Do you get defensive? Do you blame others? Do you become passive aggressive? Do you cower and wilt? What does your body language reveal? Does your voice go up an octave? Do you scowl, frown or glare? Do your hands suddenly become fists? How you respond may actually cause the situation to escalate.

At all costs, think before you open your mouth. After all, the person is your boss and has the right to fire you. A former mentor once said, “Put some distance between the stimulus and the response.” In-

stead of responding to that cryptic email or voice-mail instantly, remind yourself to cool down. If you feel the irritating situation must be re-examined, wait at least 24 hours before requesting a new appointment. Be sure the timing is right for both of you. Bosses hate being blindsided so be sure to let the boss know you want to review a situation that didn't sit well with either of you. Rehearse ahead what you wish to say. When you meet, make sure to discuss the situation objectively. Do not become accusatory. Tell how the situation made you feel. Perhaps, you were embarrassed to be criticized in front of the entire team. Perhaps, you were told you did not adequately prepare when you did what was requested. Often, the boss will respect you for speaking up and trying to mend the irritating situation in a calm manner.

Remember, you control how you will respond. You can't control someone else's behavior, but you can control your own. You can choose not to let the person get under your skin. One of our clients said she pictures the boss as someone who is browbeaten at home. Another said he imagines the boss being frustrated with his own lack of ability and berated by his own superiors. Instead of being angry, both said the boss evokes their sympathy. Flipping the switch on how you picture the person often works wonders in how you respond.

As a last resort, you can always resign. You have your own mental health to consider, and you have to determine what is best for you. For sure, bosses from hell are never easy.

**Question:** Describe your boss from hell. What works for you in dealing with his/her behavior? We're interested in your opinions. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.

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